

Hello,

I saw the write up in the December 11 Helena Independent Record, and I thought I would share with you my recent experience.

A friend of mine plans to open a restaurant soon, and I am playing a supporting role. When we filed the L.L.C. at the Secretary of State, one of the clerks told us "Oh! You should apply for grants, there is a lot of money out there and no one seems to know about it!

So I looked online to see what I could find. Small Business Administration grant and loan monies are apparently block-granted to the states. In Montana, as perhaps all states, it goes through the Department of Commerce, presently headed by Dore Schwinden, as you may know.

Sure enough, piles of \$ appear be out there... see Dore Schwinden's newsletter:

<http://businessresources.mt.gov/content/docs/BRDNewsletters/QuarterlyBRDNewsletter.pdf>

Yet when I call anything related to SBA grants in Montana, nobody has a clue, or it appears that way. "WHAT newsletter...?!" is typically the first response. We are definitely getting the shuffle. "Oh, not this office, it is that office." Oh, it isn't me that you should be talking to, it's so and so (yeah I have records somewhat though not of all emails sent. I could provide them but better yet, pretend you are going into business and call them up and see what happens!)

Finally I just pleaded to speak with some sort of entry level business counselor. I was given a number. I called the number and the phone went unanswered, and I left a message. That was well over a week ago.

So, whatever business assistance system is in place, it is being run beyond half-assed grade. I say 'beyond' because last time I saw activity like this through a government agency was in NY state back in the early 90's. Similar state funds somehow kept being mysteriously unavailable. It was only years later that it got revealed that Mario Cuomo was 'borrowing them' in part to help finance election campaigns and other things. So, you might call for an audit of that operation, and kick some ass as well in the business consumer response area.

Thanks,
Skip Kldore